



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Fighting for the human rights of Haiti's poor

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Grassroots Groups Present Counter-Perspective on Haiti's Human Rights Record

Haitian Groups Participate in First Ever Universal Periodic Review

(Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 24, 2011) — A coalition of 58 Haitian grassroots groups, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, human rights organizations, and academic institutions presented a set of 13 reports on human rights in Haiti to the U.N. Human Rights Council this week as a part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

The coalition's reports covered issues ranging from violations of the right to vote and violence against women to the responsibility to implement a rights-based approach throughout Haiti's rebuilding after the earthquake. They are designed to provide the Human Rights Council the perspective of civil society as it conducts its review of Haiti's record from now until the final hearings in October. The reports are available at: <http://ijdh.org/projects/universal-periodic-review-upr>.

“As a Haitian, I felt it was my responsibility to participate in the UPR process in order to shed light on the human rights situation in Haiti, specifically the right to education. The Haitian Government has failed to meet its obligation to protect human rights and this process is a tool to use to pressure the Government to play a more active role in realizing human rights,” said Esaie Gelin Jules who runs a school in Solino, a poor neighborhood Port-au-Prince, and submitted a report on the right to education.

Collectively, the reports make 147 recommendations to the Government of Haiti and members of the international community active in Haiti on concrete steps they should take to improve human rights over the next four years, when Haiti will be reviewed again.

“While the UPR mechanism focuses on the Government's duty to recognize and protect the human rights of Haitians, a discussion of rights in Haiti must also include the responsibility of donor countries and international actors that have played a large role in the country, both before

and after the January 12 earthquake.” said Nicole Phillips, Staff Attorney at the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH).

The recommendations will be presented to Haiti at a hearing before the Human Rights Council in October, where the government will explain its actions and policies. The government will be expected to publicly state which recommendations it agrees to implement.

The UPR was established in 2006, and provides an unprecedented mechanism to publicly review UN member states’ human rights records. Haiti is the last country to be reviewed in the first cycle, and the government is obliged to consult with civil society as it develops its own report on its enforcement of human rights.

“The UPR provides a unique opportunity to engage with the Government on human rights, and we plan to advocate for meaningful consultation with civil society. The perspective of grassroots groups representing Haiti’s poor and displaced communities is particularly important, and we hope that the Government and Council will listen to their voices,” said Mario Joseph, Managing Attorney at Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI).

The coalition of groups were coordinated by the Lawyer’s Earthquake Response Network (LERN), a network of 400 lawyers, law professors and students that came together after the earthquake to defend human rights in Haiti. LERN is led by the BAI in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and IJDH in Boston, MA.

Their efforts were supported by the U.S. Human Rights Network and You.Me.We, who provided training on the role of civil society in the UPR process.

For more information, visit ijdh.org.